

Tinker, Sailor, Spy

Around Norfolk, Va., John Anthony Walker Jr. was known as a man happily leading several lives. Walker, 47, was a retired Navy communications specialist, an arbitrator for the local Better Business Bureau, a volunteer in the search for missing children and the head of three companies that provided detective and "debugging" services. He obviously loved the cloak-and-dagger game—flying around the country in his four-seat, single-engine plane, handy with a crossbow, a .38-caliber revolver and a spring knife hidden in a cane—but no one knew how much until last week, when Walker was arrested on charges of spying for Moscow, perhaps since the 1960s.

The case could have far-reaching implications for U.S. security. Before he retired from the Navy as a chief warrant officer in 1976, Walker had "top-secret crypto" clearance to codes and communications, particularly concerning nuclear submarines whose unseen movements are key to U.S. defense. He was arrested after depositing on a country road in Maryland—perhaps for a Soviet diplomat seen nearby—a paper bag with 129 documents involving secret Navy communications. Also in the package: an apologetic letter. "This delivery consists of material from 'S' and is similar to the previously supplied material," it said. "The quantity is limited, unfortunately, due to his operating schedule."

Much of the recovered material—

largely surveillance reports on Soviet vessels in the Mediterranean—seemed to come from the U.S. aircraft carrier Nimitz, where Walker's son was serving. Michael Lance Walker, 22, was also arrested, and officials found 15 pounds of classified documents near his bunk. They had been led there by letters Michael sent to his father ("Jaws," in their private code) about the problems of storing his "souvenirs." Michael also reported being named "Sailor of the Month" at one point, and wrote: "If they only knew how much I hate this carrier."

How did officials crack the case? FBI and Navy sources say the tip came from the senior Walker's ex-wife, angry that he had drawn their son into his scheme. Suspecting that his all-in-the-family approach to espionage might extend even further, investigators also questioned Walker's brother—another retired Navy man—and his stepbrother, as well as a West Coast business associate. "We don't know what else he had access to," says FBI spokesman William Baker. They were also checking into a variety of reported business ventures to see if they—or Moscow—really financed Walker's well-heeled life-style: the plane, a home, a houseboat, a van and several female companions. Whatever the security losses, the case did bring a small intelligence gain: maps, photos and instructions for the Maryland drop—presumably reflecting Soviet spy procedures that U.S. counterspies will study.



John Walker Jr.: Cloak-and-dagger game?

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